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ABSTRACT

This is volume 13 of Leadership Abstracts, a newsletter published by the League for Innovation (California). Issue number 1 of February 2000, "Community Colleges Bridging the Digital Divide," addresses the racial and economic issues inherent in the digital divide--the discrepancy between those who are technologically literate and those who aren't--and makes recommendations for community colleges to bridge this gap. Issue 2 of April 2000, "New Game, New Rules: The Workforce Development Challenge," discusses the many initiatives, programs, and mandates concerning workforce development that community college leaders must address. Suggestions for responding to workforce issues are included. Issue 3 of June 2000, "Knowing What You're Looking for: An Outcomes-Based Approach to Hiring," suggests that community college administrators enhance their assessment strategies when hiring new employees in order to find people who work well in the contextualized college environment. Issue 5 of October 2000, "Laptops for Everyone (Part 2): An Update on the Floyd College Information Technology Project," discusses a 3-year pilot project for the University System of Georgia in which all students leased laptop computers for use in and out of the classroom. Finally, issue 6 of December 2000, "Rising Star: A Community College Foundation at Work," discusses a collaborative fundraising program that helped to increase student retention rates. (NB)

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Leadership Abstracts, 2000

Cynthia Wilson, Editor

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The League for Innovation

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Leadership Abstracts

February 2000 Volume 13, Number 1

COMMUNITY COLLEGES BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Alfredo G. de los Santos Jr. and Gerardo E. de los Santos

America's digital divide is fast becoming a "racial ravine." It is now one of America's leading economic and civil rights issues and we have to take concrete steps to redress the gap between the information haves and have nots. – Larry Irving, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Telecommunications, August 1999

Advances in information technology continue to astound us. As a society, we have unparalleled access to information, communication capacities that look and feel like science fiction, and tools for business productivity that are raising Wall Street numbers to all time highs. Breakthroughs in hardware, software, and communications are also driving change at often disconcerting speeds. These rapidly evolving opportunities and challenges mark our place in the Digital Age, where almost all new jobs require some level of information technology skill and the ability to adapt to rapid change. However, these advances also point to our place in the Digital Divide, where this technology hyperbole is increasingly realized on only one side of the "racial ravine." Data from multiple sources make it clear: the Digital Age is disproportionately distant from minority and economically challenged populations, and the distance across the divide is increasing.

These trends inspire us–community college educators–to become bridge builders. But, to build effective bridges, we must design three key imperatives into our plans. First, we must prepare for the waves of minority and economically challenged students with significant linguistic and cultural differences who are knocking at our open door. In addition to other issues that have surrounded these cohorts in the past, we must now also grapple with the significant lack of access to technology they experience. Finally, we must do more than provide these students with access to technology. We also must ensure that they develop a technology base that allows them to use technology well and that they acquire the ability to recognize and adapt to the fast pace of change in the Digital Age.

Knocking on the Open Door

With a tradition of open door admissions, low tuition, flexible programming, customized student services, and quality learning opportunities, community colleges continue Specifically, 55 percent of Hispanic and Native American Indian and 46 percent of African-American undergraduates are enrolled in community colleges.

Based on U.S. Census Bureau data, by the year 2015, minority enrollments in community colleges are projected to increase by approximately 12 percent, while the white student population will decrease by approximately 8 percent. These shifts in student demographics, coupled with the rapid rate of advancement in information technology,

send a clear message to community college leaders: the majority of digitally disenfranchised students will be knocking on the community college's open door.

As community colleges continue their commitment to provide educational access to all students–the "at-risk," the "have nots," the high school graduates, and the growing number of GED recipients–they must take an aggressive stance in finding quality ways to teach and reach our diverse student cohort. This mandate is reinforced by the growing number of our students who have a significantly low level of access to information technology.

Technology Access

Computers and the Web have created an explosion of learning opportunities for students at every level, but these digitally-driven opportunities are not being realized by all students. Access to computers and the Internet varies greatly based on socio-economic level and race or ethnicity. Alarmingly, a significant number of low-income and minority students are unable to access computers and the Web at home or in school, and the gap continues to widen. Although more than half of all white households have computers and Internet access, less than a quarter of African-American and Hispanic families have computers at home and less than ten percent of these families have home access to the Internet.

Not surprisingly, access to technology in the home is directly related to family income. A National Telecommunications and Information Administration report indicates that over 75 percent of households with incomes over $75,000 have at least one computer, compared to less than 32 percent of households with incomes between $25,000 and $35,000. The poorer families have significantly less access to this technology.

For children who are considered the "haves" in the Digital Age, familiarity with the use of computers and the Internet often begins before elementary school. However, as more and more learning opportunities via computers and the Web are being introduced and embraced in elementary, middle, and secondary schools, these K-12 institutions are viewed as the first gateway to information literacy for today's youth.

Unfortunately, though, elementary, middle, and secondary students in schools that serve primarily minority and low income populations are not benefiting from the use of classroom computers to the same extent as students who attend largely white schools. A 1999 report from The College Board indicates that "there is evidence that students with the greatest need get the least access." This finding is corroborated by a recent Educational Testing Service report indicating that schools with the highest concentrations of low-income and minority students have the highest ratio of students to computers, resulting in fewer computer literacy learning opportunities.

Technology and Change Savvy

As we begin the third millennium, computer literacy has become a prerequisite for success in today's workforce. Moreover, the workplace is replete with fundamental and structural changes that challenge participants to adapt more flexibly than ever before. Lester C. Thurow, Dean of the School of Business at Harvard University, argues that the

new economy is global, features relentless competition, and offers no such thing as a smooth ride. In this new economy, knowledge builds wealth, and the most important resource is people.

Technology is a given in the new economy, and how a corporation uses technology will determine its ability to succeed. The new economy may include low-tech companies, but they will not be competitive for long. Thus, success in the workforce of the new economy will be measured by each person's ability to use technology effectively and efficiently.

This means that simple technology literacy must give way to a focus on comfort with the underpinnings of technology so solid that it allows our students to keep pace with change. More importantly, our students must be able to evaluate critically the mass of information at their fingertips, communicate effectively with their coworkers and customers, and adapt comfortably to an increasingly global economy. In short, they must become *technology and change savvy*

Recommendations

The following recommendations are intended as a starting point for those committed to building a bridge across the Digital Divide. They should prove useful for the more complete conversations and explorations that we hope have started or will emerge soon in all academic communities.

- Community colleges should facilitate explorations of how the issues of growing minority enrollments, limited access to technology, and increasing requirements for *technology and change savvy*
- Community colleges should review the curriculum and pedagogies used in the classroom to ensure that all students develop technology literacy and the ability to adapt quickly to change.
- Community colleges should develop strategic plans to enhance and continuously improve the use of technology in learning and teaching processes.
- Community colleges should provide opportunities for all members of the faculty and staff to use computers, the Internet, and other emerging technologies.
- Community colleges should strengthen their occupational and other short-cycle offerings to continue to prepare the growing number of information technology workers needed in the new economy.
- Community colleges should create venues, on their own or with partners, where all students can access computers and the Internet on and off campus.
- Community colleges should work with their local K-12 school systems to facilitate the professional development of teachers in the use of technology in learning and teaching processes, particularly in communities with low income or majority minority populations.

- Community colleges should seek relationships with technology partners in their local business communities who will directly and indirectly benefit from technologically literate employee prospects.

Conclusion

Information technology is one of the drivers of the emerging economy, an economy that is global, highly competitive, and dependent on people as its most vital resource. To be a successful participant in the workforce, each person will need to have *technology and change savvy* enter through the open door with little or no previous access to computers, the Internet, and technology literacy skills, community college leaders must take strategic and aggressive steps to help provide the necessary access and skill sets. By rising to the expectation, community colleges are well positioned to help bridge the Digital Divide.

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Leadership Abstracts

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NEW GAME, NEW RULES: THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE

Larry J. Warford and William J. Flynn

As state and federal governments devise new initiatives, programs, and mandates concerning workforce development, community college leaders may feel they are drowning in a sea of acronyms: WIB, WIA, ETP, ITA, FERPA, ALX. These and other programs appear faster than colleges can develop plans, hire staff, and implement initiatives that at first glance may seem to have no place in our mission statement. Still, we accept the new responsibilities, write the grants, implement the programs, develop the curricula, hire the staff, and somehow manage to stay above the rising tide of increased workload, expanded mission, and endless paperwork. The following model of a strategic approach to dealing with the emerging workforce development movement provides an alternative to the typical response community colleges have to the growing number of federal and state programs.

A Strategic Plan for Workforce Development

Given the community college's predilection for shared governance and consensus-driven decision making, responding quickly and effectively to workforce issues can be a challenge; however, the community college can develop a comprehensive, institutional response to the demands of the nation's workforce development needs. Such a response begins by analyzing the college's local workforce, identifying targeted segments, and matching those segments with the most appropriate unit of the college to meet customer and stakeholder needs and expectations.

Analyzing and Identifying Workforce Segments

Solutions will be driven to some extent by local and regional considerations, but one way to analyze the local workforce population is to segment it based on the recognition that lifelong learning is rapidly becoming the major growth industry in community colleges. Institutional planning can be based on serving four major workforce segments:

Emerging Workers. Typically 22 years of age or younger, emerging workers are preparing for their first full-time employment. Coming straight from high school with few, if any, career plans, they experiment with courses, vacillate between transfer and occupational choices, and eventually settle on a prescribed program of study that will lead to employment. They are more likely than other groups to be day students, to hold part time jobs, and to lack the academic skills needed for quick advancement to a four-year institution.

Transitional Workers. Moving from one career to another, transitional workers have been laid off from previous employment, are returning to the job market after time out for family reasons, or are upwardly mobile individuals seeking to improve their social and financial situation by switching jobs. Their motivation is high and their time frame for reentering or moving up in the workforce is short.

Entrepreneurial Workers. The entrepreneurial workforce includes a large number of people who operate or own small to medium-size businesses. They have discovered the community college as a substitute for an in-house training center, and they take advantage of the college's community services programs, weekend college, fast-track courses, and noncredit workshops. With limited resources at their disposal, the entrepreneurial workers seek the quick and economical return on investment provided by the community college.

Incumbent Workers. Currently employed and in need of additional training to maintain their present jobs or qualify for promotions, incumbent workers often rely on company-sponsored professional development programs to access educational opportunities. These workers have a strong desire to attain new skills at an accelerated pace.

Matching Workforce Segments with College Divisions

A typical college might deal with the four types of workers and their diverse educational and training needs in varying ways. In the following scenario, workforce training needs are approached differently in four college divisions.

One part of the college--Division A--has offered vocational programs for many years, providing an excellent foundation for the future workforce. Quality staff, up-to-date facilities, and strong advisory committees are its hallmarks. In addition, programs are constantly reviewed, revitalized, and reinvented to assure that the training students receive is what they need for success on the job. Supplementing the classroom experience, cooperative education programs provide on-the-job training for hundreds of students in local businesses. These partnerships in the community are highly valued since they not only provide quality training to students, but also afford invaluable feedback about the college's programs to instructors and administrators. The Tech Prep Program provides an articulated partnership and curricular ties between high school and community college career programs, enabling high school students to begin career paths in high school that they can follow into community college with no duplication of course work.

Another part of the college--Division B--is sensitive to the local economy, but in a different way. Layoffs in the region have created a need to provide programs and services to people who are in transition from one job or career to another. Thus, the college provides career planning, job search assistance, and retraining to dislocated workers at little or no cost. The challenge is to take workers who have spent their working lives in one industry, who are underemployed, or who have been laid off from their present jobs and give them the adaptive skills to change careers and attain new occupational goals. Thus, local employers see the college as a source of emerging workers and as a place that can produce quick turn-around for transitional workers.

A third component of the college--Division C--has been providing programs and services to small business owners, including loan packaging assistance, resource materials, confidential business counseling, and educational programs that meet their schedules and needs. Faculty and staff members with business owner/manager experience are active in assisting the business community. Many people who are thinking of starting their own

businesses use the college to glean information and answers to their questions before making a commitment.

The fourth component--Division D--focuses on current worker training and retraining by offering customized programs designed to meet specific business and industry requests. In addition to programs focused on company needs, the college continues to provide open-enrollment continuing education opportunities. These offerings include hundreds of sections of classes, workshops, seminars, and institutes focused on providing job upgrade skills for workers. They are held in a variety of locations so individuals can access educational programs conveniently and at minimal cost.

Questions for Community College Leaders

Given these four workforce segments and the four college areas that serve them, leaders face three questions:

1. How well do these four components--Divisions A, B, C, and D--mesh together to provide seamless responses to a myriad of workforce development trends, programs, and opportunities? Segmenting and then targeting the local workforce is a sensible way to meet current legislative challenges. With a reasonably accurate analysis of the four workforce segments, identifying college programs and charging them with developing timely responses should be fairly easy. Responding as individual divisions is one thing; responding collectively, aligned in a strong institutional commitment to meeting workforce needs, is quite another.

2. How much do internal politics, history, and campus inertia impact the institution's ability to respond to national workforce initiatives and local community needs? Administrative roles and responsibilities, once clearly defined, are buffeted by newly mandated programs that have no respect for the traditions of academia or the comfort of organizational culture. As lines of responsibility on campuses continue to blur, new job titles are created, new programs are developed, and new funding streams materialize. In response, we attempt to fit the new programmatic square pegs into our old structural round holes.

For example, occupational education deans, instrumental in delivering technical and occupational education to students in the emerging workforce, are now asked to take over economic development and contract training responsibilities. Continuing education deans involved in delivering training locally through noncredit, fee-based programs, contract education, and economic development initiatives meet the needs of both the entrepreneur and the incumbent worker. Increasingly, they are asked to modularize credit curricula and deliver it in nontraditional modes. Student services deans are asked to absorb new groups of transitional workers into an already heavy caseload of undergraduates. Each dean struggles to find a way to meet the new demands, remaining flexible and responsive while operating under labor contracts, staffing patterns, and education codes developed in an era untouched by national workforce legislation.

3. Can anything be done about it? As community colleges are asked to provide training, education, and certification, we need first to answer fundamental questions about how we meet this challenge: What should a contemporary work-related curriculum be? Why do

the design, approval, and implementation of it take so long? Why do we structure student support programs to serve recent high school graduates when the average age of our students is near 30? Given the growing popularity of these programs, perhaps we should reexamine the institutional priorities that marginalize them.

Starting a campus dialogue on developing a sensible, cost effective response to the demands of workforce legislation is a strong first step. A clear understanding of the implications of accountability issues should be demanded of all campus stakeholders. Reverence for old market segments, clinging to outmoded organizational structures, and continuing campus turf wars must be replaced by an institutional strategic plan to meet workforce development demands.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter once said, "Change is debilitating when done to us, but exhilarating when done by us." Perhaps the current workforce development initiatives, mandates, and funding streams will give us an incentive to take a hard look at how we position and organize ourselves. Then, using a strategic approach to workforce development, we will be better able to respond effectively to the challenges that accompany workforce development programs in our community colleges.

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Leadership Abstracts

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KNOWING WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR: AN OUTCOMES-BASED APPROACH TO HIRING

Ronald L. Baker

It's important to know what you're looking for before you try to find it.

Community colleges are experiencing significant staff turnover through retirements and competition from the private sector. The issue confronting community college leaders is not only recruiting potential employees, but also selecting new employees who fit with the increasingly complex, contextualized, and interrelated job requirements of the positions they will fill. Community college administrators are increasingly aware that very few employees fail because they lack employable knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). Rather, employees are more likely to fail because their KSAs lack substantial congruence with those necessary for success in the job. The issue of congruence, therefore, has significant implications for hiring. It suggests that applicant KSAs should be assessed not only in terms of strengths and weaknesses, but also in terms of congruence with KSAs required in the position. Community college leaders are responding by implementing an expanded variety of assessment strategies to enhance hiring effectiveness.

The Conventional Hiring Model

The conventional hiring model consists of an application, a résumé of previous education and experience, an in-person interview, and reference checks with applicant-identified references. In some cases, this model is expanded to include supplementary questions or a portfolio of prior work. These models are relatively effective in assessing some elements of job-specific knowledge. They are neither adequate nor sufficient, however, in assessing the full complement of skills and abilities required for most positions. As a result, conventional screening models contribute only partially to a comprehensive assessment of employee fit.

These models may also be vulnerable to inaccurate or incomplete information that complicates an authentic assessment of applicant qualifications. Up to 30 percent of applicants misrepresent their educational preparation or work experience on their résumés. Rather than exhibit their authentic KSAs, applicants frequently simply detect and reflect what interviewers want to see and hear. Fearing legal implications, references are often reluctant to disclose potentially detrimental information about a candidate.

In response to concerns that "doing what we've always done will get us what we've always got," some community college leaders advocate expanding and diversifying conventional screening and assessment practices. They argue that simply enlarging the number of questions, requiring more detail in applicant résumés, conducting more conventional interviews, and increasing the number of professional references will not significantly improve hiring effectiveness. To improve hiring effectiveness, institutions

need to move beyond a philosophy of more of the same. They need to move to a strategic, outcomes-based philosophy.

Enhancing the Model--Beginning at the End

The development of a clear, realistic job description is critical to the success of any hiring strategy. Although that might appear to be an obvious starting point, failing to begin with a hiring *outcome* that is grounded in reality is a very common flaw that significantly threatens the effectiveness of the hiring process. Delineation of job-specific duties and responsibilities is fundamental to the development of the job description. In addition to shaping the desired hiring outcome, these duties and responsibilities also form a guiding framework for the identification of required employee KSAs to successfully fulfill expectations for the position. Hiring models that lack a close alignment of realistic job-specific expectations with necessary employee KSAs compromise an accurate assessment of applicant fit with the position. However, a meaningful job description with clearly defined duties, responsibilities, and requisite KSAs will not by itself ensure a successful hiring outcome. It must be supported by the collection of relevant data to assess applicant qualifications and fit with the position.

Interviews provide opportunities for first-hand observations of some KSAs (e.g., communication, confidence, composure), but assessments of other KSAs (e.g., teamwork, leadership, initiative) are based entirely on applicant self-assessments or derived from secondary data--most commonly the opinions of references and other third parties. The use of secondary data to assess applicant fit is risky at best. Screening activities must be expanded to include more opportunities to acquire primary assessment data.

Assessment Options

Interviews. *Conversational interviews* are the most commonly used nondocument assessment tools in the screening process. Almost always, these interviews take the form of questions by evaluators and answers from applicants. *Behavioral interviews* are based on the theory that past behaviors are good predictors of future performance. In behavioral interviews, applicants are asked about past job-related situations and what they *did* in responding to those situations (e.g., Describe a situation that required your intervention to resolve a conflict between staff members. How did you resolve the situation?). In *situational interviews*, applicants are presented with hypothetical job-related situations and asked to describe what they *might do* in responding to those situations (e.g., What would you do if a member of your staff was accused of unethical conduct?).

Interviews may be conducted in a variety of formats and structures. Question formats range from completely unstructured (no standardization or guiding principles) to highly structured (uniform consistency and rigid compliance with predetermined questions). Scoring structures range from a single comprehensive assessment of the entire interview to an assessment of each individual response based upon predefined benchmark answers.

Work Simulations. To expand opportunities for demonstration and authentic assessment of primary data, a number of innovative screening strategies have emerged. A popular and effective strategy, the work simulation, presents applicants with work situations or

requires applicants to perform tasks directly related to the job. The associated tasks are designed to allow applicants to exhibit first-hand evidence of critical KSAs specified in the job description.

Motor/psychomotor work *simulations* require applicants to physically manipulate an object. In a *verbal simulation*, applicants use interpersonal and communication skills to address a situation commonly experienced in the job. *Individual action/decision-making simulations* require applicants to take actions or make decisions in job-based situations. To assess group dynamics, *group simulations* engage two or more people in the resolution of an issue to assess individual and interpersonal behaviors such as leadership, communication, and teamwork. Finally, *stress simulations* subject applicants to multiple concurrent demands to assess their abilities to respond to pressure-laden situations.

Work simulations are as varied as the job descriptions from which they are drawn. Forklift operators may be required to negotiate an obstacle course to demonstrate control of the equipment. To evaluate knowledge and interpersonal skills, academic advisors may be asked to work with a student in a mock advising session. A budget-based in-basket activity may be used to assess a finance officer's analytic abilities and knowledge of financial practices. To exhibit teamwork and student centeredness, small groups of faculty applicants may be charged with developing a proposal for a new academic program--including student, instructional, library, and technology services needed to support it. Candidates for public relations positions might conduct a mock press conference to assess their listening and speaking abilities while under pressure.

Assessment Effectiveness

Consistent, highly structured interviews are preferred for legal and procedural reasons; however, they are frequently perceived as limiting in their ability to assess individual KSAs. Unstructured, free-flowing interviews enable a richer assessment of individual KSAs through personalized inquiry, but complicate consistent assessment across the pool of applicants. Anecdotal and research evidence suggests that validity and reliability increase with interview structure. It is unclear, however, if there is a point at which additional structure ceases to increase validity.

Studies have shown that brief observations of *nonverbal behaviors* have high validity in assessing personal attributes--if they are conducted in relevant, work-based contexts. Work simulations offer opportunities for relevant, context-based observations of nonverbal cues such as eye contact, facial expression, body language, and gesturing that can contribute valuable information to an assessment of employee fit. Since work simulations enable applicants to demonstrate KSAs they would not be able to exhibit in other forms of screening, they are generally well received by applicants as effective methods of assessing job-related abilities.

Considerations

The use of work simulations introduces some interesting questions to the debate on hiring practices. Do work simulation activities effectively simulate job expectations in accurate job-related contexts? What, if any, are the legal or ethical issues associated with these

nontraditional assessment activities? In highly competitive markets, will the use of unconventional screening activities eliminate qualified applicants? Are work simulations fair and equitable for internal and external candidates? Are evaluators properly trained in the observation, assessment, and evaluation of work simulation behaviors and actions?

As these questions are addressed, new hiring models will emerge that will enhance hiring effectiveness by aligning well-defined job descriptions with meaningful and authentic assessments of applicant abilities. These models may also provide some protection against legal challenges regarding the validity and predictability of hiring practices. The results of screening assessments may also form a natural foundation for a professional improvement plan for the successful applicant.

Implications for Practice

Although there is no universal "best" hiring model, an outcomes-based planning process can foster the development of effective hiring models through a sequence of interrelated questions: 1) What will the employee actually do in the position? 2) What are the contexts for those activities? 3) What KSAs foster success in the fulfillment of those activities? 4) How can those KSAs be authentically exhibited? 5) How will those KSAs be assessed and evaluated?

The importance of the first two questions cannot be overstated. They form the strategic compass that guides the entire selection process. The third and fourth questions shape the development of related screening and assessment activities. The fifth question provides the foundation for effective judgments that are refined through the filter of the other four questions. Collectively these five questions help to establish a clear assessment of employee fit by focusing on the ultimate hiring outcome--an effective and successful employee who makes a positive contribution to the fulfillment of institutional mission and goals.

Ron Baker is Associate Director for the Commission on Colleges of the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges.

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Leadership Abstracts

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LAPTOPS FOR EVERYONE (PART 2): AN UPDATE ON THE FLOYD COLLEGE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROJECT

H. Lynn Cundiff and Sandy M. Briscar

In April 1998 readers of this forum were introduced to Floyd College's Information Technology Project (ITP), a three-year pilot project for the University System of Georgia in which all students leased laptop computers for use both in and out of the classroom. Floyd College was the first two-year college in the country to initiate such a program. The following is an update on the project as the end of the pilot period is reached.

To Build Technology Skills and Enhance Learning

In 1997, Floyd College, which serves 2,700 students on its main campus and four extension centers, became the first two-year college in the country to require all students to lease laptop computers. The project stemmed from a successful three-year planning and lobbying effort by Floyd College to the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. The Regents approved the ITP as a pilot to study the effects of integrating telecommunication skills across the curriculum and providing personal computers to all students.

The ITP is intended to build students' technology skills, change the way they learn in and out of the classroom, and help them become more responsible for and involved in their own learning. Each student's portable, high-end notebook computer is equipped with the latest software, a CD-ROM, a modem, and a network card, and offers extensive flexibility and options for learning. The learning options offered through the project are particularly valuable to students most often found at two-year colleges--older commuter students who have families and hold full-time jobs. Of particular benefit to these students is anytime, anyplace access to the Internet, to online libraries, and to e-mail, allowing them to avoid travel and child care costs by doing research, accessing assignments and course resources, and participating in study groups from home.

Floyd College had three years to perfect a replicable model for integrating information technology across the curriculum. Use of the computers included e-mailing assignments, preparing PowerPoint presentations for class, using the Internet for research, and getting lecture notes online. Assessment is the key to this process and has been an integral part of the ITP since its inception. Project planning involved extensive research and consultation with students, faculty, administrators, community leaders, and information technology experts in business and education. Since the fall of 1997, the college has been collecting data to evaluate each component of the ITP model through multiple assessment mechanisms, including faculty and student surveys, focus groups, online evaluations, and faculty and student journals. Early findings indicated consensus among constituents that the college was moving in the right direction with the project and that it would be beneficial to students in school as well as in their future professional lives. Community

leaders lauded the project and its potential to provide a technologically savvy workforce that would benefit workers and employers and attract new business to the area.

Expanded Focus on Electronic Student Services

In addition to immersing students in technology in the classroom, Floyd College set out to make electronic student services a real and valuable component of the ITP. During the first two years of the project, the college focused on aspects of student services that are easily offered electronically. Like most other two-year colleges, Floyd initially provided admissions, financial aid, student records, and registration online. Finding themselves in a ubiquitous computing environment, students quickly demanded enhanced delivery modes of other services and programs.

One such example was the decision to offer bookstore services online; the college contracted with an outside vendor to receive book orders and to provide home delivery. After a considerable amount of criticism from students during the first year, the college became its own virtual bookstore vendor, a move that has been well received by the students.

Another challenge involved providing student counseling electronically. The counseling staff revised two required classes (Freshman Experience and Career Development) and offered Web-based sections. The success of these courses proves that anytime, anyplace course offerings can be effectively delivered if the counselors are committed to using their expertise creatively to meet the needs of distant learners.

Finally, the faculty and staff realized that they needed to purposefully help students accept responsibility for their own lifelong learning. Two new programs targeted at assisting students in developing skills to access and manage information available via the Internet have been designed to meet this need. Placement services are offered entirely online, including career searches, employer-candidate matching, résumé writing, and access to numerous job opportunities. An electronic health services program with emphasis on self-education, preventative health care, and community partnerships is scheduled to go online early in 2001.

Initial Adjustment--Computer Skills Training

Three years of trials, errors, adjustments, and successes have boiled down to the original question: Did technology actually have any effect on learning?

From a pedagogical standpoint, the starting level of student computer skills was a problem. Early in the project, a survey was designed and administered by a trio of Floyd College faculty members to provide helpful insights and to deal with the changes that affected their classroom experience. Although more than 97 percent of students said they had previous experience on the computer, only 50 percent had used e-mail and Windows applications. This finding indicates that computer experience does not necessarily include the ability to manipulate a computer in an educational environment. This information presented a serious challenge to the ITP project since an underlying premise was that most students would possess basic computer skills prior to entering the classroom. Before proceeding further into the development of a high-tech classroom, a system was needed

that would allow an instructor to be certain of the average technological competence of the class before assigning projects.

Faculty member Michael Windelspecht ("Technology in the Freshman Biology Classroom: Breaking the Dual Learning Curve," The American Biology Teacher, in press) concluded that despite the widespread use of computers in educational settings, it is unlikely that most institutions have the resources to train all incoming freshmen in computer literacy topics prior to the start of classes; therefore, a method was needed to enhance computer competency in the classroom without sacrificing valuable time dedicated to the curriculum. To reduce dual learning curves, a newly developed course provided technology training to run in the background of an academic course (i.e., learning computer skills and learning an academic subject).

Windelsprecht observed that after the implementation of this training course, there was a significant decrease in technology-related problems in comparison to previous classes. More importantly, the students had a higher level of interest in research that resulted in some exceptional projects. He concluded that "most endeavors with technology in the classroom typically focus on the use of a single technology to address a specific problem. While there is no question that from a pedagogical perspective this is an ideal situation, the transition to the electronic classrooms of the future will require that multiple technologies be utilized simultaneously."

Three Year Assessment

In the spring of 2000, Floyd College students were polled to measure student perceptions of what they got out of the ITP and to determine whether technology actually had an effect on learning. Those participating in the poll represented a sampling of the entire student body population, with a margin of error at three percent. According to the survey, 60 percent of the students feel that computers help advance their learning and that using a computer helps them make a connection between different subject areas--a learning many students do not achieve until graduate school. Forty-one percent of the students indicated that having a laptop raises their own expectations of their performance in class work, 75 percent responded that the instructors have higher expectations of their research, and 80 percent noted that it is easier to do research with the laptops.

Respondents indicated they benefit from the ITP through easy access to instructors outside of class (76 percent), the ability to check grades from home (53 percent), and the ability to register for classes on the Web (60 percent). Among the thirty questions asked on the survey, the only negative response referred to the cost of the computer lease. Students pay $300 per semester for exclusive use of the machine, Internet service, a 60-hour per week Help Desk service, and an infrastructure that includes wiring for Internet hookups in the library, student center, and all classrooms and offices.

During the past three years, Floyd College has seen students take more responsibility for their own learning. Accessibility to the entire academic community via an electronic environment has created an open dialogue among institutional stakeholders, including students, and 24-hour a day support services have helped faculty, staff, and

administrators refine education processes to offer learning opportunities and college services in ways that meet student needs.

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Leadership Abstracts

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RISING STAR: A COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION AT WORK

Betheny L. Reid

With increasing frequency, community colleges are calling on their foundations, or are creating foundations, to encourage community involvement in college activities and to provide an alternative funding source to support student learning and community building. In 1997, Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) Board Chair Bob Thornton and Chancellor Bill Wenrich challenged the district and foundation executive teams to think about the foundation's role in making a "significant and lasting impact" in the community. The result was the Rising Star Program, a $30 million scholarship endowment that in its first year (1999) supported nearly 700 economically needy, ethnically diverse students. The early success of Rising Star, reflected in a retention rate for these students that is 20 percent higher than average for community college students, is a result of fortunate timing, dedicated leadership, and successful collaboration.

Getting It Right: The Right Problem at the Right Time with the Right Leaders for the Right Reason

The Right Problem. When district leadership decided to chart a new path for the foundation, the superintendent of the largest school district in the county had just been indicted on a felony; the high school drop-out rate was pushing 60 percent; 56 percent of high school graduates entering community colleges required developmental courses, and a healthy economy left employers without qualified workers. The leadership team quickly determined that construction of new buildings and expansion of technology weren't the answer; rather, the critical need was to support the development of the community's greatest resource—human capital.

DCCCD needed a program that could meet two objectives: (1) address local education and workforce needs by recruiting high school seniors with offers of full scholarships to earn either associate's degrees or certification in any of 120 DCCCD training courses, and (2) provide incentive for students in lower grades to graduate from high school by promising free postsecondary education through the community colleges. The district developed a simple program designed to meet these objectives: to receive a scholarship covering tuition, books, and fees, a student must graduate in the top 40 percent of his or her high school class, have economic need as defined by the program, and enroll in one of the seven DCCCD colleges no later than the fall following graduation.

The Right Time. Although traditional elements of major fundraising campaigns were not yet in place, DCCCD leaders recognized that the timing was right to launch a major fundraising initiative to capitalize on the credibility and proven track record of the Dallas community colleges. When the chancellor secured a contribution of one million dollars

from Texas Instruments and another million from an anonymous donor, foundation leaders had the confidence to formalize the fundraising goal of a $30 million endowment.

Because a broad business and civic initiative to reenergize the undeveloped southern sector of the county was already under way, Rising Star began its two-year pilot with 27 public high schools in five school districts in that area. Targeting this area allowed donors to support the broader county southern sector initiative by supporting Rising Star.

The Right Leaders. Recognizing the foundation's expertise in building community and raising funds, the chancellor appointed a well-recognized and experienced vice president from one of the Dallas community colleges to spearhead Rising Star's recruiting and retention efforts. Her credibility with area K-12 principals and counselors and her positive working relationships with all seven of the colleges were helpful in successfully implementing a high profile program. In addition, the chancellor pledged his time to attend meetings with prospective donors. His reputation and dedication combined with the board chair's commitment and high profile in the community to assure donors that Rising Star was a serious and lasting endeavor. This assurance led to another million-dollar contribution before the kick-off press conference was held.

The Right Reason. The program's philosophy is based on the foundation executive committee's belief that everyone should have a chance at the American Dream and that a college education through DCCCD is a step toward realizing that dream. By offering students the choice of a degree or an occupational certificate, Rising Star also provides practical solutions to the business community's immediate need for qualified workers. Funded by a permanent endowment, the program allows the colleges to promise grade school students that a college scholarship awaits them if they stay in school and graduate.

Chaos Theory in Action: Figuring It Out As We Go Along

Until 1997, DCCCD's foundation was, in the words of then newly elected Board Chair Bob Thornton, "an organization that raised about $400,000 a year, held a banquet, declared victory, and went home." Rising Star caused a dramatic change in the activity level of the foundation as its executive committee transformed itself into the program's fundraising team: Foundation officers quickly reorganized the foundation into a fundraising office, with each officer chairing a division focused on one of three broad areas of donors: individuals, corporations, and foundations.

During this transformation, every aspect of the foundation office changed, from accounting to reporting to communications to staffing. Adorned with maps of the county pinpointing schools in the K-12 system, the office resembled a political campaign in full swing. Rising Star posters, flyers, t-shirts, and other materials were strewn about, and daily meetings were held to determine the next steps in fund raising. A brightly colored logo was developed specifically for the program, and staff adopted a popular rock song for the Rising Star anthem.

Foundation staff collaborated with experts among DCCCD's research, marketing, and business staff to identify, develop, and implement every aspect of the program: donor proposals, press conferences, student recruiting activities, and student tracking. A Rising

Star liaison was established at every college to orient, enroll, and support each Rising Star student. Frequent meetings with all groups were held to discuss, create, and change processes for administering the program. The chancellor was often present at meetings, an indication of his commitment to Rising Star.

Within ten months of announcing Rising Star, $9 million was secured and 693 Rising Star students were enrolled in DCCCD colleges. Of these students, approximately 70 percent were women, 89 percent were minorities, 85 percent were the first in their family to attend college, and 100 percent fit the economic need criterion.

Sprinter's Pace to Marathoner's Race

After the initial success of fundraising and recruiting efforts, the Rising Star team shifted the frantic start-up pace into a methodical, sustainable plan. Fundraising activities continued to center around the highest leadership of the district and foundation, with both the chancellor and the board chair dedicating time and contacts to securing resources.

DCCCD and foundation staff continue to work collaboratively on the administrative details of tracking more than 1,000 Rising Star students now and expanding to another 29 high schools throughout the county. The growth of the program to include all schools within the DCCCD service area has opened the fundraising doors of businesses and individuals with interests beyond the southern part of the county that was the focus during the pilot.

Tracking and reporting are among the most critical components of the program. Donors are interested in the progress of the students, businesses are interested in mentoring and recruiting students, and DCCCD administrators are interested in the students to determine support services and other programs to meet their needs. Information obtained from tracking and reporting is used to improve the program.

Not Simply a Knight in Shining Armor

The foundation's leaders recognized that many charitable programs appear like knights in shining armor to help the community, but quickly fail because they lack funding or expertise in administering such programs. To keep from following the same path, Rising Star sought solutions by organizing as a collaborative effort between the foundation's community leaders and DCCCD's educational leaders. The foundation provided what DCCCD could not—scholarship funds—while the district provided the foundation with what it needed to be successful—expertise in higher education.

This collaborative approach has been instrumental in the program's continuing success. Heralded by the Dallas mayor as his "number one charity of choice," Rising Star immediately attracted the attention of local media and secured several of the largest gifts in the foundation's 25-year history.

With such a quick and positive response, both the initial pilot and countywide expansion of the program were launched a year ahead of schedule and continue to grow. The U.S. Army has partnered with Rising Star to offer its College First incentives to students, and DCCCD counselors work with Rising Star students who are eligible for federal and state

assistance to secure these funds for students whenever possible. The impact of this leveraging of public dollars has actually increased the donors' confidence that their gifts are truly meeting the needs of students who would not obtain this assistance from any other source.

Through Rising Star, the DCCCD foundation is answering the chancellor's charge to make a "significant and lasting impact" in the community. This wide-reaching scholarship program opens the door to higher education a little wider for Dallas area students, providing a portal through which they can not only reach for the stars, but become stars themselves.

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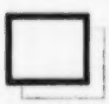

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